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A CIA DIRECTOR LOOKS BACK
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Retired Adm. Stansfield Turner, writing on his tenure as CIA director during the Carter administration, ironically complains about the "more than 100 deletions" made by the agency he ran for four years.

"These ranged from borderline issues to the ridiculous," Turner said in the introduction to his new book, "Secrecy and Democracy; the CIA in Transition," which will be published by Houghton Mifflin next month.

"I appealed many of these questionable deletions to the higher levels of the CIA and obtained only three minor concessions," he said.

Yet, Turner concedes that it was he who urged Attorney General Griffin Bell in 1978 to prosecute Frank Snepp, an ex-CIA employee, for writing a book about the CIA without agency clearance. As a result, all the some \$60,000 profits from Snepp's book about CIA operations was confiscated by the government.

"They resorted to this tactic," he said of the deletions in his book, "because they were upset with the book's highly critical view of the Reagan administration's mishandling of our intelligence activities, especially its indifference to any oversight of the CIA."

Turner, appointed CIA director by Carter in 1979, says he found the CIA and the intelligence community "a colossus" that he tried to bring under manageable control but found himself confronted by an "octopus."

He did not have much regard for the agency's espionage branch, judged it overstaffed and loaded with World War II veterans of the Office of Strategic Services, the CIA's predecessor.

It what became known as the "Halloween Massacre" of October 31, 1977, Turner reduced staff in the espionage section by 822 positions, some by early retirement, some by attrition, some by firing.

There were reports from veterans at the time that more than 1,000 agents were affected and for the first time in the CIA's history, agents met with reporters in discrete taverns and bars to express their bitterness at the "purge."

Turner defends the action and says there were enough espionage agents left to do the job and that more sophisticated electronic methods were providing major intelligence results.

"In my experience, human intelligence occasionally got a superbly useful piece of information," he said. "More often, it provided helpful background information about a country and its politics but nothing to aid with an immediate decision ... Besides, no outsider, be he a reporter or a student of national security, has an accurate idea of how many people the secret CIA needs ... The press simply was parroting the views it received at second hand from people who purported to know."

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The real ruckus, Turner said, was "over power and turf, not over the number of people required."

Turner does not say much that is new on what has been regarded as the CIA's major failures during his tenure -- the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran that resulted in the overthrow of the shah and seizure of American hostages; and the terrorist attacks on the Marine headquarters at Beirut airport in which 241 Americans soldiers were killed.

"It was unreasonable to expect the CIA to have anticipated this particular threat far enough in advance to have placed an agent in every terrorist organization," he said of Lebanon.

As for Iran, he wrote: "There was, for instance, no master plan for unseating the shah. It was simply a protest that gained momentum." Turner also indicated that the shah would not have been pleased to find CIA agents mingling with dissidents.

Turner has given mixed signals on how much authority the U.S. head of intelligence should have. At present, the CIA director is also director of Central Intelligence, that is, overall boss of all U.S. intelligence services including the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency and its service branches and even the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence, among others.

Turner indicates that when he had the job, he wanted power over everything and resented the efforts by other intelligence branches to bypass him and try to report directly to the White House.

Now, he said he feels the CIA director should run that agency only and that a separate director of Central Intelligence should be in charge of coordinating the output and analysis of all other branches.